

# Southwestern Toad

*Bufo microscaphus*  
Family Bufonidae



**Global Rank:** G3G4

**State Rank:** S1S2 (NV); S2 (NM, UT);  
S3S4 (AZ)

**Distribution:** Isolated populations from southern Nevada to southern Durango, Mexico; and coastal southern California to northwestern Baja California. The southern California/Baja California populations are considered by some to be a separate species, the arroyo toad (*Bufo californicus*). Common along the rivers and lakes of the Gila and San Francisco River drainages. From near sea level to around 6,000 ft. (1,830 m.) in elevation.

**Description:** Adults reach to about 3 1/4 in. (8.1 cm.) in snout-vent length. They are a rather uniformly warty, stocky toad with a light-colored stripe across the head, including the eyelids. The parotoid glands are oval-shaped, widely separated, and pale towards the front. Color above is greenish gray, buff, brown, or salmon. The color harmonizes with the general color of the soil and rocks. There usually is a light area on each sacral hump and in middle of the back. Color is buff below and often unspotted. Cranial crests are weak or absent. Young are ash-white, light olive, or



*Current range of the southwestern toad*

salmon above, with or without prominent black spots, and have red-tipped tubercles on the back. Undersides of feet are yellow. In adults, both males and females have pale throats. The voice is a melodious trill, lasting up to 10 seconds. The vocal sac is round.

**Reproduction:** Breeds from March through July. They are not dependent upon spring or summer rains to initiate breeding, probably because they normally breed at permanent water sources. The photoperiod and temperature may be more important in stimulating breeding activity. Gravid females have been found in early April, calling and egg laying as early as February 7, and mature tadpoles found in late May through July. Eggs are laid in long strings with up to 3,000 to 4,300 eggs per string.

**Food:** The diet is believed to include a wide variety of small arthropods, including true bugs, beetles, and moths. Specimens from Utah contained a sand cricket, several beetles, a true bug, ants, bees, moth larvae, snails, and plant fragments.

**Habits:** This is a toad of washes, streams, and arroyos in semiarid parts of the Southwest. It frequents sandy banks grown to willows, cottonwoods, or sycamores, and along rocky streams in the pine-oak belt. It is usually associated with permanent ponds or rocky streams with relatively shallow water over sandy or rocky bottoms, and it rarely moves away from watered sources.

**Management Implications:** Found in a series of isolated populations. Common in most locations in central Arizona, but may be rare in Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. The California subspecies may also be rare; it is considered by some as a separate species, the arroyo toad (*Bufo californicus*).

**Important References:** Stebbins, R.C. 1985. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. The Peterson Field Guide Series. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY; Degenhardt, W.G., C.W. Painter, and A.H. Price. 1996. Amphibians and reptiles of New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM.